


THURSDAY
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Board of commissioners votes in new leadership

Ethel Jarvis replaces Clarke
as chair, Nelson is vice chair

By MATTHEW McCORMICK
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The Sullivan County Board of Commissioners welcomed a fresh face and elected new leadership Wednesday during its first meeting of 2007.

 **Newport** Commissioner Jeff Barrette formally took over the seat he captured from former board chairman Don Clarke in November's election.

In addition, Commissioner Ethel Jarvis, who won a second term after defeating challenger Bob Beaudry of Charlestown, was elected to replace Clarke as chairman. Commissioner Ben Nelson was re-elected as vice chairman and Barrette was chosen to take on clerk duties.

Jarvis said the year would be a busy one for the trio, who are faced with numerous issues. Perhaps the most contentious matter will be the county nursing home, where the use of a private consultant, Genesis

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HealthCare, has sparked controversy among the commissioners and the county delegation.

Democrats Jarvis and Barrette have said they are uncomfortable paying a for-profit, outside company to help out at the county-managed facility and want to phase out Genesis' services.

"I want to make sure that it's understood that when I ran for county commissioner and said we want patients before profits, that was not an empty thought for me," Jarvis said. "We must provide excellent care for our residents."

County Manager Ed Gil de Rubio, nursing home administrator Scott Wojkiewicz — a Genesis employee — Nelson and Clarke have contended that the consultant's work is essential to providing that care.

In addition to dealing with Genesis, Jarvis said the commission would be taking up plans to build an assisted living facility and find a way to address serious overcrowding problems at the county jail.

Despite all that the commissioners will have on their plate, Jarvis said there likely

will be one thing they do not have to worry about: a contentious relationship with the county delegation, which signs off on the county budget each year.

A rift between the two bodies has grown since the commissioners chose to bring Genesis on, but Jarvis said the new political makeup of both bodies — 12 of 13 dele-

gates are Democrats, as are two of three commissioners — will do much to smooth over their relationship.

"I think that we'll get along just fine with the delegation," she said. "I think we're going to accomplish a lot."

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